

# The Stoop: Speculation on Positive Futures of Black Digital Spaces

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Inspired by previous research examining the challenges and benefits of Black Twitter (a community gathered on a platform used by Black people but not created by or for them), this design fiction presents a fictional study of a successful yet speculative social media platform named The Stoop. We envision this digital space as one that a Black woman created and a predominantly Black team designed and developed. Imagining what future online communities of marginalized people could be based on current struggles and shortcomings provides the inspiration for this design fiction. Proactively addressing content moderation, harassment, content controls, and the need for reducing appropriation while centering on the lived experiences and preferences of Black people allows this design fiction to joyfully speculate on what it can look like to get it right as a way of thinking through best practices for current technology design.

CCS Concepts: • **Human-centered computing** → **Social networking sites**.

Additional Key Words and Phrases: Black Twitter, Design Fiction, Online Communities

## ACM Reference Format:

Shamika Klassen and Casey Fiesler. 2023. The Stoop: Speculation on Positive Futures of Black Digital Spaces. *Proc. ACM Hum.-Comput. Interact.* 7, GROUP, Article 17 (January 2023), 24 pages. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3567567>

## 1 AUTHORS' INTRODUCTORY NOTES

*“Imagination is so powerful that it could set forth 400, 500 years of something wrong, which means that it very well could set forth 400, 500 years of something right. That’s sort of the beauty of humanity.”*—Jason Reynolds, *Library of Congress Young Adult Ambassador* [67]

Design fiction operates as a unique and powerful tool for researchers, designers, and technologists to imagine the future whether hopeful or fearful [74]. By engaging with design fiction as a method, researchers can actively consider and weigh the consequences of particular research including implementing that research in the real world or designing a specific technology [63]. For example, a designer might use design fiction to explore possible impacts or outcomes of new design work through fictional studies or papers that allow room for criticism [8]. From a design fiction that imagines how current technology will evolve within society [48] to extreme virtual solutions [47], an effective design fiction allows both the author and the readers to consider the consequences of the technology at hand [7]. Alternatively, a prototype can take a test run in a future or alternative present world and be put through its societal and ethical paces via design fiction [46]. Creators of design fiction can access the role of world builders and use key and select artifacts as windows into those worlds including using their speculative design to examine the “lifeworlds” of artifacts such as the social, political, and perceptual environment they exist in [17, 73].

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2573-0142/2023/1-ART17

<https://doi.org/10.1145/3567567>

In order to craft speculative futures, imagination is required. And to aspire to imagine righting some of the wrongs done to an entire marginalized community in the digital space takes joyful yet intentional writing. One of the express outcomes of creating a design fiction is to cultivate today's research around depictions, good or bad, of the future [4]. While the temptation is strong to follow the negative depictions of the future that abound, our speculative design fiction focuses on what could go well with a future digital space. The (fictional) Stoop functions as an elated vision of communities like Black Twitter or Somewhere Good. The question driving this design fiction is: "What could a social media platform created by and for Black people look like?" Both authors, along with Kingsley, McCall, and Weinberg, conducted research on Black Twitter that isolated the benefits and challenges of using the Twitter platform to gather as a part of the Black Diaspora in the digital space, and discussed future work envisioning how spaces created by and for Black people could address issues such as dealing with racism, outsiders, and not feeling as though you were in a safe space [42]. We wanted to use speculative design fiction as an avenue for picking up where this work left off, to engage in an exercise that envisions a positive future involving tech and Black people.

It is also worth noting that much of the current body of design fiction work does not center the voices of marginalized people. However, this is changing in part thanks to recent work involving speculation, technology, and Black and Brown communities. This work focuses on and is created by authors from these communities and calls for more in this space. Afrofuturism, a term coined by Mark Dery [20] that evolved into a concept for design aesthetic and critique, affords Black designers, researchers, communities, and people the opportunity to envision how our world within our without our current temporal confines could be when centered around the imagination and hopes of Black people. Several scholars within the human-computer interaction research community allowed their work, including participatory design with Black and Brown communities, to be inspired by Afrofuturism [11, 22, 32, 33, 70, 72]. Harrington et al. make the case for an expansion of the design canon that inspires interactive technology design to include speculative works from Black women like Octavia Butler or Afrofuturistic offerings from artists like Janelle Monae in order to acknowledge and be inspired by the decades of speculation found within the works of Black people, and other marginalized communities [34]. Leaning also on Afrofuturism as well as Critical Race Theory (CRT), Bray et al. developed the Building Utopia toolkit for assisting co-designers and researchers engaging with Black and Brown communities in participatory design activities that address power imbalances and harmful design or research dynamics [12]. By using toolkits like this within speculative praxis in marginalized communities, researchers and designers looking to envision an alternative present or a possible future can do so in a way that honors and uplifts the experiences and expertise of those communities. Each of these contributions motivate this design fiction in an effort to contribute to the question, "what if *we* designed the future?"

Our imaginary study of a future social media platform is a window into a digital world built for and by Black people with a view overlooking the care, intention, and passion that went into creating such a digital space. Design fiction is both a powerful and flexible tool that can open pathways for discourse [45], and can be evaluated by the knowledge it seeks to create [5]; our goal is to create discourse around the aspirations of social media platforms and the ways that marginalized online communities can craft their own digital spaces. By contributing an uplifting vision of the future featuring Black people in the designer's seat, ideally a conversation can be sparked about the need to recognize and increase the representation of and technological contributions from Black and marginalized people.

## 2 DESIGN FICTION

### 2.1 Introduction

*“It’s funny because I grew up hanging out on the stoop in the Bronx, Harlem, and Brooklyn. So much can happen there. As I grew increasingly disillusioned with social media and decided to make my own, I knew exactly what I wanted it to be like.” (Rashida Walker, creator of The Stoop)*

In 2025, on the 160th celebration of Juneteenth, former Facebook Product Manager Rashida Walker launched The Stoop. This platform hosts online communities and builds on the features of popular platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, and Instagram. What makes The Stoop unique is that the platform was created by a Black woman and the design and development teams were predominantly Black in an effort to create a social media platform by and for Black people. Because of this rare intentionality for a digital space at the scale of The Stoop, over 200,000 platform members as of December 2026, we wanted to better understand how a Black team for a majority Black user base designed and developed the platform to best support the majority-minority group online and learn what members of the platform thought of those efforts.

The Stoop provides a rich landscape for researchers interested in online communities of Black people. In an effort to better understand how The Stoop learned from former digital spaces in which marginalized communities gathered, as well as gain a clearer picture of the design choices that built the platform centering on those communities, our research team conducted semi-structured interviews with Walker, members of her design and development team, and members of The Stoop. Through these interviews, we sought to answer the following research questions:

- How does The Stoop as a platform created by a predominantly Black team for a predominantly Black user base make design and development decisions?
- How do users perceive the similarity and differences of The Stoop compared to other popular digital spaces for the Black community such as Black Twitter?

While seeking answers to our research questions through interviews with the design and development teams of The Stoop, we recognized alignments between the approaches to crafting the platform and some of the principles of Design Justice as outlined by Sasha Costanza-Chock [18]. Costanza-Chock wrote about how the profession and act of design, mainly in the tech industry, fall short for the often marginalized people adversely affected by the results of design and outlined the need to include them into the process. The principles of design justice act as a guide for those who adhere to them to shift to designing with communities, recognize and center the voices, knowledge, lived experiences, and existing solutions of communities, and use design for the good of these communities amongst other tenets [21]. We outline and unpack these connections throughout our findings section.

The structure of our paper is as follows. We will first discuss the background to our research study. This will cover an overview of The Stoop and how Black people have gathered across time from physical to digital spaces. After establishing this foundation, we will outline our methods as well as our findings. Next, we will discuss what these findings mean to the Black and marginalized communities in The Stoop as well as the broader digital space landscape, before concluding with future work.

### 2.2 Background

**2.2.1 The Stoop.** The Stoop describes itself as “the best spot on the digital block.” With a pay what you want (PWYW) or serve to earn monthly subscription and no ads, the platform makes itself accessible to all who want to join. The look of the platform is a throwback to the 1980s with modern

touches (See Figure 1). The layout includes a main feed where posts from people you follow appear. There is also a “For You” tab (inspired by TikTok) in which the platform recommends content and accounts from across the social network based on your engagement and the popularity of content. The Stoop offers “communities” where users can join and connect with other members of that community. When you upload your photo for your profile, it becomes “stooped” into an 80s-inspired avatar where you get to customize the accessories from headbands, exercise outfits, hairstyles unique to the Black community [19], shutter shades or mirrored sunglasses, and more.

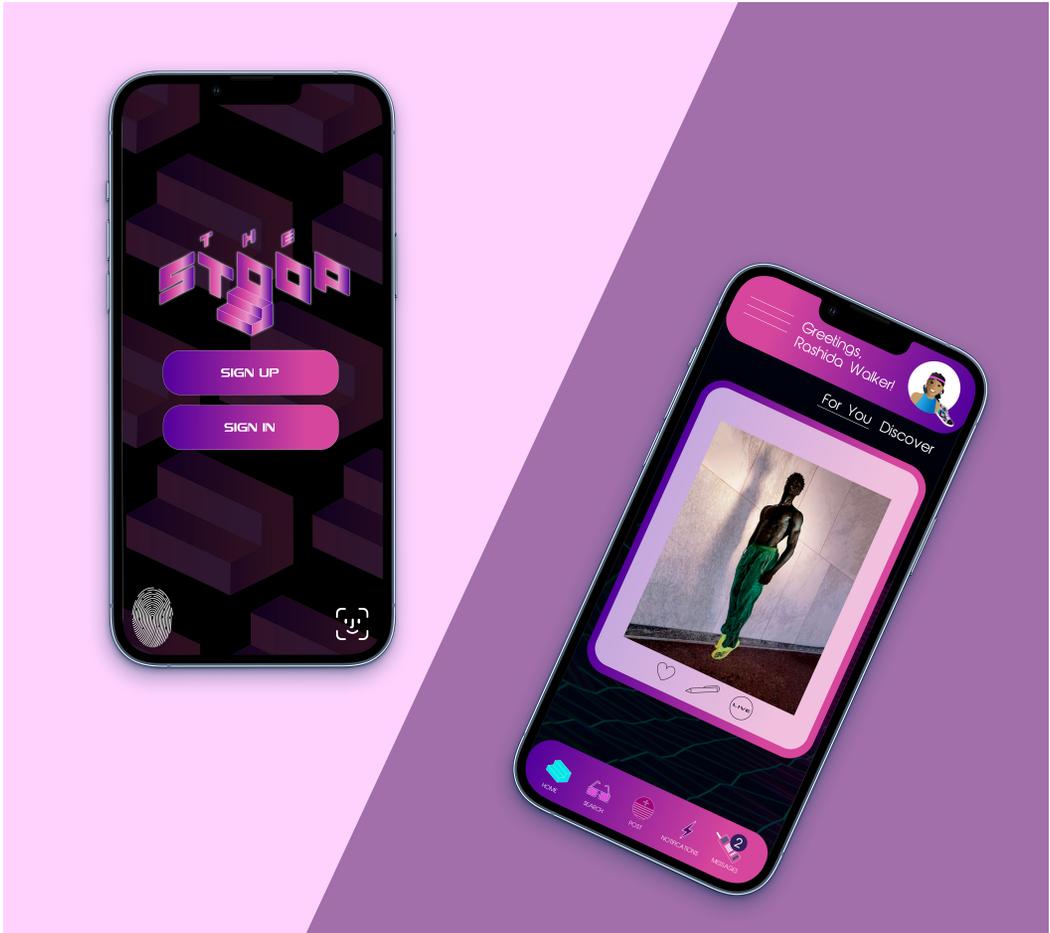


Fig. 1. Promotional materials for The Stoop designed by Black graphic designer Taylor Collier. (<https://bit.ly/TheStoopImage>)

Users can post any type of media from text and images to voice and video. There are even options to add mixed reality (XR) elements such as virtual or augmented reality posts. The option to select the audience for your posts is available at the post level and is a site-wide default choice that works retroactively when changed. Comments, which are threaded, drive much of the engagement on the site. Content from other social media sites can also be embedded and even include the metadata of the shared content to more easily cite original content creators. The content on The Stoop is

moderated mainly through a combination of automated and paid human moderators, however, “communities” are allowed to use their own moderators who have the authority to remove content.

The subscription model encourages members to either pay what they want or exchange content moderation and other tasks that keep the platform running for monthly access. Empirical research has shown that, when given the option to pay what they want, “buyers pay positive prices, often exceeding the marginal costs of the product” [64]. Members who choose the PWYW subscription will therefore support a business model for The Stoop that renders the choice to sell member data and targeted ads like Facebook and Google unnecessary [3, 29, 60]. For members who choose instead to exchange the completion of tasks on the platform with access, The Stoop offers an avenue of participation that circumvents the need to pay. There are racial disparities as it pertains to employment earnings with Black and Brown people earning less than their White counterparts [44, 53]. Providing alternative ways to participate with The Stoop beyond just paying a monthly fee speaks to the efforts made from the platform to acknowledge, and in their own way respond to, societal inequities such as wage gaps that exist for Black and Brown communities that may reduce their disposable income. With no ads and a commitment to never sell member data, The Stoop offers a digital and accessible safe harbor for Black and marginalized people.

*2.2.2 A (Digital) Space for Us.* Black people in the United States have for generations found ways to gather together and communicate secretly while in plain sight in efforts to connect with one another and seek freedom and justice. Enslaved Africans in the U.S. would use spirituals with coded meanings or meet together in hush harbors to surreptitiously communicate and share their shifting culture [26, 35]. Black churches were ground zero for the civil rights movement of the 1950s-1970s where organizing and preparing for protests occurred with college students and community members [14] outside of worship services which Dr. Helen Kenyon referred to as the most segregated hour in America [66]. Then, as communication options became digitized, Black communities appeared in bits and bytes.

Starting in the 1980s, Black people came together in early internet bulletin board systems (BBS) like Afronet (a Usenet community for Black people); in the early 1990s, Black digital communities coalesced on the world wide web [America OnLine’s Black Voices or NetNoir (launched on the 130th celebration of Juneteenth in 1995)] and on Georgia Tech University’s Universal Black Pages and Knowledge Base [50]. In the late 1990s and 2000s, Black people online, over 16 million of them, gravitated to spaces like BlackPlanet.com where HTML creation tools were used for designing user home pages [39]. By the 2010s, Black communities coalesced in Black-only communities on Facebook, Black-led accounts on Instagram, or in the open secret known as Black Twitter, an ever changing online community existing within Twitter composed predominantly of and expressly for Black people. Essentially, as communication technology options innovate, so too do the ways in which parts of the Black diaspora connect and gather together.

### 2.3 Positionality Statement

The first author of this study identifies as a Black woman whose research is informed by Black Feminist Thought and Digital Black Feminism. Additionally, the first author holds privileges through her education and middle class socio-economic status. The second author is a white woman who also holds other marginalized identities. Together, both authors have studied online communities, in particular those composed mainly of marginalized people.

### 2.4 Methods

For this study, we conducted 16 semi-structured interviews with both platform and team members of The Stoop over the course of three months (see Table 1). We initially reached out to Walker

Table 1. Demographics for Interview Participants

Participant	Role	Gender	Race/Ethnicity
P1 (Walker)	Founder, Creator	Woman	Black/African-American
P2	Designer	Woman	Black/Hispanic
P3	Designer	Man	Black/Nigerian-American
P4	Developer	Man	Black/African-American
P5	Designer	Non-binary	Asian-American Pacific Islander
P6	Developer	Non-binary	White/Caucasian
P7	Developer	Woman	Black/African-American
P8	Member	Man	Hispanic/Black
P9	Member	Man	Asian-American Pacific Islander
P10	Member	Woman	Black/African-American
P11	Member	Man	Black/African-American
P12	Member	Woman	White/Caucasian
P13	Member	Woman	Black/Jamaican-American
P14	Member	Woman	Black/British
P15	Member	Non-binary	Hispanic/Puerto Rican
P16	Member	Man	Hispanic/Dominican

with a request to interview her and her team. She shared the request with those on her design and development teams and she, along with three designers and three developers, agreed to interview. To recruit platform members, our research team shared a call to participate in three consecutive monthly editions of The Stoop’s newsletter. Though Walker agreed to be identified in our study (and her identity as the creator is well known and covered in the media), the remaining team and platform members each requested to remain deidentified. During the interviews, we recorded audio files with consent. We conducted interviews on the preferred platform of the interviewee—Zoom, Skype, Google Meet, or Google Voice. We transcribed and cleaned the audio files on Temi before uploading them to Taguette for the research team to conduct open and axial coding in order to discover major and subcategories [15]. To find patterns across the categories, we conducted a thematic analysis of the transcripts [10].

## 2.5 Findings

After conducting semi-structured interviews with Walker, members of her design and development team, and members of The Stoop, four critical themes emerged. These findings speak to our research questions about how to design for a Black-first and majority-Black digital space as well as comparing The Stoop to its predecessor and original inspiration, Black Twitter. First, the design and development process mirrored design justice principles. Second, the team addressed content moderation and harassment head-on. Third, team members of The Stoop incorporated lived experiences into the system. Fourth, when comparing The Stoop to Black Twitter, the former replicated the benefits of the latter and addressed its challenges.

*2.5.1 The Design and Development Process.* While interviewing the team at The Stoop, we quickly understood the passion and intention behind the platform. Everyone on the team participated in deep and rich research—including user experience and personal reflection. From the backend to the frontend of The Stoop, care and fierce commitment to the Black community and its needs in

the digital space were threaded throughout. In the first three findings, we want to highlight what that care and commitment looked like and how it manifested in the platform.

*Designing with Design Justice.* Design justice is an approach to the art and research of design that centers on marginalized experiences and voices while addressing imbalances of power between the designer and those affected by the design [18]. When talking with Walker and the design team members about what decisions went into the user experience and user interface (UX/UI) of the platform, each interviewee shared experiences that we recognized as aligning with one or more design justice principles allowing us to use these principles as a lens to understand these remarks. Walker described design justice principle ten <sup>1</sup> during her recounting of the origins of the platform.

*“When I first envisioned The Stoop, I wanted to learn from what Black people were already doing online and in digital spaces like Black Twitter, Clubhouse, Instagram, Reddit, and TikTok.” (P1, Walker)*

The way design decisions for The Stoop are made appear to always include an open dialogue between the team, members of the platform, and the broader community—a choice that serves as a positive example for other platforms. The second <sup>2</sup> and sixth <sup>3</sup> design justice principles are echoed in P2’s response to the design process:

*“We conducted extensive user experience research before, during, and after the launch to find out how to center the voices and needs of Black people first and foremost in the platform. They were the experts, we were the ones who wanted to bring their needs and desires to life.” (P2, a Black/Hispanic woman on the design team)*

Another designer on the team, P5, spoke about a poignant conversation during an early design meeting for The Stoop in which an invitation to share past experiences with online platforms inspired them to open up about their trauma and the desire to heal themselves and others.

*“I vividly remember that conversation. People were sharing these stories of feeling like their data was just being mined and sold for profit they would never see or dealing with exhausting harassment just for being themselves in online spaces. For me, I talked about how hard it was to be misgendered all the time online. It’s already hard enough to experience that offline.” (P5, a non-binary Asian-American Pacific Islander member of the design team)*

This conversation aligns well with design justice principle number one. <sup>4</sup> P3 reflected another principle, number seven <sup>5</sup>, that speaks directly to how to engage communities with design by sharing design knowledge and tools.

*“We want people to be able to customize their profiles and access design features to really make the app their own. We built tutorials into The Stoop as well so that any member could take full advantage of these options.” (P3, a Black/Nigerian-American man on the design team)*

Distilling these design justice principles into one approach for creating a platform can support inclusion and distribute power during the process. Choosing this path is likened to community

<sup>1</sup>“Before seeking new design solutions, we look for what is already working at the community level. We honor and uplift traditional, indigenous, and local knowledge and practices.” [18]

<sup>2</sup>“We center the voices of those who are directly impacted by the outcomes of the design process” [18]

<sup>3</sup>“We believe that everyone is an expert based on their own lived experience, and that we all have unique and brilliant contributions to bring to a design process.” [18]

<sup>4</sup>“We use design to sustain, heal, and empower our communities, as well as to seek liberation from exploitative and oppressive systems.” [18]

<sup>5</sup>“We share design knowledge and tools with our communities.” [18]

organizing. Instead of relying on extractive tactics that take raw elements from “users” and send value up the chain toward corporate or institutional endeavors, members of the team for The Stoop approached their potential and actual members “from a community asset perspective” [18]. By intentionally anchoring the entire design process of The Stoop in the human-centered and social justice-oriented principles of design justice, the platform sets itself apart from other social media platforms whose design process was less focused on marginalized voices and instead situates its members as central to the platform’s look, feel, and features.

*Addressing Content Moderation and Harassment.* For the second finding, interviewees, predominantly from the developer team, spoke clearly about how they incorporated features and content moderation styles based on what previous platforms got wrong or did well. The industry standard of content moderation involves using machine learning to identify certain spam, hate speech, and child sexual abuse content alongside manual content moderation performed by humans (often working for lower wages in a third-party company from the social media platform) to assess posts for violations. Options for sanctions range from warning the account holder, removing the offending content while notifying the account holder, and temporarily or permanently banning the account holder [51]. For The Stoop, there is a human-in-the-loop automated content moderation style wherein offensive content is automatically flagged before being reviewed by a human who makes the ultimate decision. The desire for involving a person in the process reduces the opportunities for algorithmic harm [6, 25, 52]. P6, a non-binary White/Caucasian member of the development team illuminated how The Stoop approached content moderation differently:

*“We use a rehabilitative approach to content moderation. After an initial warning, we require the completion of training within a certain time frame in order to prevent more punitive actions like account freezing. Until the training is completed, the account has no posting access and limited functionality on the platform. For repeated violations that go through rehabilitative attempts unsuccessfully, we do permanently ban members.” (P6, a non-binary White/Caucasian member of the development team)*

Because the human moderators are full time employees, they have access to mental health care and other benefits which are crucial to their mental well being and for reducing attrition on the team [59]. Additionally, many members of The Stoop pay for their membership which may contribute to better behavior on the platform and therefore less taxing work for moderators. As online communities scholar Amy Bruckman wrote, even a small token fee for participation can dramatically reshape user behavior. For example, one early online community, deluged with low quality posts, began charging 25 cents per post, and as a result the quality of content on their site improved. The discussion site Something Awful also required a one-time fee that raised the level of conversation, and also was a deterrent to bad behavior because if your account was banned, you would have to pay the fee again to create a new account [13].

The Stoop has an economic model that either requires platform members to pay what they want each month or exchange completing tasks on the platform for access to the platform. According to Walker, currently 86% of members are paying for the service with an average monthly payment of \$5. With so many of the members choosing to pay for their membership, the amount of possible content violations to the Terms of Service or Code of Conduct are ostensibly reduced. However, with all these intentional implementations for their content moderation, Walker expressed concerns for maintaining the human-in-the-loop automation model at scale.

*“It is hard because we wanted to be this niche platform and make every effort to cultivate as safe and brave a space as possible. But as we grow, I am worried about maintaining*

*the necessary amount of human moderators at full-time employment and keeping our moderation system the way we designed it." (P1, Walker)*

Scaling the platform would necessitate a re-examination of the content moderation model in conjunction with the business model if the current practice of maintaining full-time human content moderators were to continue as it requires a certain level of consistent funding. Increasing members potentially requires more moderators. Not to mention, as membership expands across national borders, content moderation would need to reflect the cultures, languages, and contextual needs of new members whose lived experiences differ from those of current members. While the platform is relatively young and small in comparison to more established platforms, these issues remain in the distant future. However, Walker and her team are aware that they will need to continue considering solutions before they need to be implemented.

Another example of how The Stoop learned from previous issues around content moderation involves how African American English (AAE) is (mis)handled. Sap et al. found in 2019 that hate speech detection models were marking AAE tweets on the Twitter platform as more likely to be hate speech [61]. P4 spoke to how the developer team addressed this type of issue.

*"We used dialect training and race priming so that annotators whose labels train our models are better equipped to recognize AAE and not mark it as hate speech. We also hired diverse annotators so that our members could speak freely and naturally without the risk of getting snarled in our efforts to address actual hate speech on The Stoop." (P4, a Black/African-American man on the development team)*

Another side of the content moderation coin is harassment. P7 shared how The Stoop wanted to set itself above and beyond the basic responses other platforms use to address harassment.

*"I remember that tweet from years ago where they basically said if your platform doesn't allow for reporting or blocking harassment from day one, it was definitely built by tech bros. So we all knew we wanted to be the exact and complete opposite of that." (P7, a Black/African-American woman on the development team)*

The tweet P7 was referring to <sup>6</sup> speaks to how often other features are prioritized for new social media platforms over and above addressing safety issues. Overall, the development team of The Stoop learned from research and their own experiences in digital spaces to create an open and affirming environment that avoided the pitfalls of other platforms.

*Informing a Digital Space with Lived Experiences.* Our interviews uncovered stories of Walker and her team adding to the user experience research insights from their own lived experiences to empathize with and better design and develop for their members. Much of the team's lived experiences included being one of few in the tech industry. Despite decades of reporting diversity statistics in the tech industry, the numbers of Black people, especially Black women and non-binary people, remain low and stagnant. The issue is not a pipeline problem but instead a leaky pipe with attrition causing retention to falter for many BIPOC people in the tech industry. The factors involved in cultivating interest in tech, getting into and through a tech-related higher education degree, and securing and staying in a tech-related job as one of few if not the only Black person on a team or even in a company are complex. But, Walker knew that she needed to be the change she wanted to see in the world.

*"When I started this platform, I went out of my way to recruit and consider as many Black people as possible for our team as legally as possible [laugh]. I wanted to build this platform with people who could relate to those who would be using the platform. It was*

<sup>6</sup><https://twitter.com/AngryBlackLady/status/516604901883797505>

*more effort for sure, but if my little platform could do it with the humble resources we have, the excuses of these bigger platforms are just bogus.” (P1, Walker)*

We asked each of the design and development team members what it was like to work in a predominantly Black company. Many of the Black-identified members of the team expressed never having experienced a work environment where they were not one of the few people of color, let alone Black people. P7, a Black/African-American woman on the development team, referred to being one of the few Black people in a room as being “...the chocolate drop.” But there is one non-person of color on the development team who shed light on being a minority at The Stoop.

*“I have never been the only white person in the room. Thanks, however, to the culture that Rashida established from the beginning, I was never made to feel less than or like my perspectives and experiences were not valued. I have also learned so much from my colleagues that I had only heard snippets of in news articles or from previous colleagues in the past.” (P6, a non-binary White/Caucasian member of the development team)*

Instead of treating P6 like a “token” as several Black team members have been in past work environments, Walker and the rest of the Black members of her company used their previous experiences to inform a better approach to work culture for minorities in particular and everyone in general.

Several of the interviewees also discussed issues they encountered online in other platforms or digital spaces. One interviewee specifically mentioned how an encounter on a previous platform inspired them to pick up programming in an effort to change the tide for Black people online.

*“I was on this platform that shall remain nameless. I found myself so excited when I first started reading and posting and following people, but then I would get bogged down by the racist replies and comments to my posts and those of people I liked on the platform. The report/block features were paltry at best for a while and I felt like there has to be a better way to do things. I had been playing around with programming and started to take it more seriously once I realized that the hobby I thoroughly enjoyed could become a skill that made online experiences better for people like me.” (P7, a Black/African-American woman on the development team)*

As Walker cultivated a team, she wanted to address and change the experience she had with being one of few Black people on her team at Facebook. She also desired to invite Black people who were eager to use their skills for good. By allowing past experiences across the team to inform how The Stoop was developed, designed, and manifested from the inside out, Walker and her team crafted a unique and special place for Black people first and foremost. However, before The Stoop existed as *the* digital space for the Black diaspora, there was Black Twitter.

**2.5.2 The Stoop versus Black Twitter.** We interviewed nine members of The Stoop and asked a series of questions about their experiences and impressions of the platform including questions that aligned with the semi-structured interview questions from Appendix A in [42]. The first questions revolved around how members defined and described the platform. Many of the platform members recognized right away that The Stoop intentionally creates a digital space made for Black people.

*“The Stoop is absolutely a space and place first and foremost for people of the Black diaspora. Other marginalized people are welcome and no one is turned away. But the way the platform is set up, it caters to Black people.” (P10, a Black/African-American female member of The Stoop)*

Even non-Black platform members understood that The Stoop held space primarily for Black people. However, there was also room allowed for non-Black people who recognized the importance of a Black first digital space without being threatened by its existence.

*“I stumbled across The Stoop because of people sharing screenshots and posts on Twitter. I knew right away that the app was for Black people, and I did not want to take that away from them. People like me who are not Black are not turned away, but it is like being a friend of the family versus being a member of the family.” (P12, a White/Caucasian female member of The Stoop)*

For platform members who share their Black identity with other cultures, like P8, a Black/Hispanic male member of The Stoop, they found the platform to be welcoming of every part of their identity while especially celebrating their Blackness.

*“The Stoop is where I can go to be my full self, not just Black and not just Hispanic. I have communities in The Stoop with other mixed people as well as Spanish-speaking people and feel like I can show up authentically on this platform.” (P8, a Black/Hispanic male member of The Stoop)*

Platform members expressed a collective understanding of The Stoop’s commitment to providing a digital space for Black people where different marginalized communities and allies were also welcome.

*Building on the Benefits of Black Twitter.* As we continued to interview members of The Stoop, several of whom knew of or used Black Twitter, it became clear that many of the benefits previously found in Black Twitter were present in The Stoop. In previous research, we interviewed people familiar with Black Twitter and discovered a litany of benefits the online community provided: community building, safety, information sharing/seeking, warning about racism, empowerment, and activism [42]. Members of The Stoop shared their experiences with the platform that distilled well into these categories.

In regards to community building, Pape et al.’s early work on online communities where such communities were established around a shared identity and shared common practices informed our analysis of Black Twitter [54]. For The Stoop, members overwhelmingly possessed a shared identity as people of the Black diaspora. Common practices amongst members include similarities with Black Twitter such as co-viewing and second screen watching of popular streaming media [71] as well as an extension to these practices on The Stoop like holding and attending virtual performing arts experiences for members (like comedy shows, dance performances, theater, and more).

*“I went to one of the first performances on The Stoop. They got the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater to do a performance called Transcend and Ascend. I am so glad I got to witness that with other members.” (P15, a Hispanic/Puerto Rican non-binary member of The Stoop)*

Another shared experience on The Stoop is hosting or participating in self-care healing circles. Members purchase handmade bundles that are mailed to them, gather on The Stoop to open them together, and enjoy the time and fellowship with other members in their community groups or personal circles.

*“I actually went to a healing circle for Black male-identified people a few months back. There was a chill playlist and we got to go through some icebreakers that weren’t too corny before doing a couple of exercises. The bundles came with small journals and pens along with a package of sandalwood incense, two tea lights, and a small multi-tool pen. I remember thinking at the time, wow, The Stoop really opened me up to this.” (P11, a Black/African-American male member of The Stoop)*

Thanks to the thoughtful and thorough groundwork laid by Walker and her team, the members we interviewed all agreed that The Stoop was a safe space. Having robust content moderation and

community moderators for the community spaces as well as clear avenues for reporting, blocking, and designating who sees what content all contribute to a platform where everyone truly feels comfortable, relaxed, and welcome to be themselves. P15, a Hispanic/Puerto Rican non-binary member of The Stoop, shared the following about their safety levels on The Stoop:

*“I really appreciate how The Stoop gently reminds people of your preferred pronouns with a simple overlay of the preferred pronouns next to the username if you are tagged in a post or replying to a post. More platforms should do this!” (P15, a Hispanic/Puerto Rican non-binary member of The Stoop)*

Just as people who engage with Black Twitter query the community, so too do members of The Stoop. Information sharing and seeking occurs frequently according to our interviewees who relayed their own instances of requesting information as well as providing it. P9, an Asian-American Pacific Islander male member of The Stoop, asked about Black-owned businesses in their local community they could patronize. P14, a Black/British female member of The Stoop, wanted advice about moving to the United States in general and about their specific city in particular. P11, a Black/African-American male member of The Stoop, offered a moving story about how their response to a request for a barber in his city made a child’s day.

*“So a white guy who was in the Fatherhood community has a mixed son around three years old. The boy’s mother, a Black woman, encouraged him to find a barber for his son’s first haircut, but he was at a loss. So he turned to the other parents in our slice of The Stoop. I stepped up and offered my barbershop as a welcoming place for his son’s first cut. They ended up coming in and we were able to help them both feel comfortable. I have a 14-year-old boy myself and I know how important hair is in the Black community.” (P11, a Black/African-American male member of The Stoop)*

In addition to sharing information ranging from products and services to experiences and opportunities, members of The Stoop also share information about racist incidents. Some marginalized people turn to the digital space when dealing with and processing racist incidents [68, 69]. These warnings about racism are also ways to cope, deal with, and heal from occurrences that are all too often in the lives of marginalized people. P10, a Black/African-American female member of The Stoop, spoke about a post she wrote that overwhelmed her with positive and affirming replies:

*“I was in a new restaurant, well new to me. And I got up to go to the bathroom. There was another woman coming out of the bathroom and she stopped and exclaimed, ‘Wow, your hair is so cool! I wish mine could do that’. And then she proceeded to touch my locs. I was in my early twenties and this had never happened to me before. For some reason, I awkwardly thanked the woman who had just violated my privacy, my bodily autonomy, and my humanity. After I returned to my dinner date, I did not know how to talk about the incident and I wasn’t even sure if the woman would be in earshot so I didn’t say anything. It wasn’t until there was a trending series of posts on The Stoop about Black hair and other people’s relationship to it that I finally spoke up about what happened to me. So many other people, especially Black women, sympathized with me and helped me process what had actually happened at that moment.” (P10, a Black/African-American female member of The Stoop)*

Stories like P10’s where the members of The Stoop stepped out to support, encourage, uplift, commiserate, and celebrate with one another were peppered throughout our interviews. This overall sentiment of empowerment that members of The Stoop lived into is an integral part of the experience. When P8, a Black/Hispanic male member of The Stoop, started their business, they

got customers and orders from all over the country within a few days. As P13, a Black/Jamaican-American female member of The Stoop, was wrapping up her studies on her way to becoming the first person in her family to graduate from college, she got so much support from other first-generation college students, and members in general, to keep going. So naturally, when she posted a picture from her graduation ceremony:

*“My post got so much love and I felt like not only did I do it but we all did it together and for ourselves, those who came before us, and those who are on the come up behind us.”*  
(P13, a Black/Jamaican-American female member of The Stoop)

Just as members were moved to root for each other, they were also willing to mobilize together. Since its launch, The Stoop committed to aligning itself with the quest to bring equity and justice to the Black community and all marginalized communities. From Say Her Name<sup>7</sup> and Stop AAPI Hate<sup>8</sup> to the Human Rights Campaign<sup>9</sup> and the I-Collective<sup>10</sup>, The Stoop provides space, resources, and information about social justice organizations from across the BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ spectrum. For Walker, this decision alongside ongoing support needed to be a part of The Stoop.

*“The Stoop is a social media platform but it is also a social justice platform. I wanted to be able to lift up my Black siblings as well as my BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ niblings so to speak and work together toward collective liberation. The Stoop provides space, resources, and time through volunteering to several organizations as an internal team and we share those opportunities with our platform members. I don’t just want to change the world. Tech giants in the past have changed the world, but not for the better. I want to help make society in general, and for Black people in particular, better.”* (P1, Walker)

Members of The Stoop like P12, a White/Caucasian female member of The Stoop, expressed taking advantage of the opportunities The Stoop afforded for getting involved in activism on and off the platform.

*“I wanted to learn more about the movement for Black lives as an ally. There are ways to do that on The Stoop, so I created a community for allies to learn together without having to have a Black person or organization doing the emotional and intellectual labor to organize and run that space.”* (P12, a White/Caucasian female member of The Stoop)

While The Stoop replicated the benefits of Black Twitter on its platform, we also found through our interviews the ways in which it tackled the challenges of Black Twitter.

*Addressing Black Twitter’s Challenges.* The Stoop also addresses some of the challenges found on Black Twitter. We already discussed safety, so let’s turn to the other shortcomings: outsiders, appropriation, being called out, and racism. P3, a Black/Nigerian-American man on the design team, mentioned specifically why The Stoop wanted to learn from the shortcomings of communities like Black Twitter:

*“Almost all of us had heard about or even engaged with Black Twitter. So in the early days of planning and designing The Stoop, we poured over everything from our own experiences, research about the community, and our own user experience research with people who used Black Twitter. While it can be an incredible place to put your finger on the pulse of the Black community, it was not without its flaws. We did not want to fall into those same traps with our platform, so we took the time to distill as many of those problems as*

<sup>7</sup><https://www.aapf.org/sayhername>

<sup>8</sup><https://stopaapihate.org/>

<sup>9</sup><https://www.hrc.org/>

<sup>10</sup> According to their website, “The I-Collective Stands For Four Principles: Indigenous, Inspired, Innovative, And Independent.” <https://www.icollectiveinc.org/>

*possible and brainstormed ways to fix, address, or avoid as many of them as we could.”*  
(P3, a Black/Nigerian-American man on the design team)

As far as outsiders on The Stoop go, the ethos of the platform recognizes everyone who is not a bot is welcome as long as they adhere to the code of conduct and community guidelines. There is also a platform-wide covenant that exists as a living document for the members of The Stoop to accept and petition to add to that outlines expectations of behavior, ways to call people in (as opposed to out), and what happens if people fall short of the codes included. "Throw glitter not shade" and "Challenge the idea, not the person" are a few examples that were inspired initially by other covenants and community groups seeking to build an inclusive and functional space that took care to support everyone individually and collectively [31]. Upon joining The Stoop, the covenant is part of a mandatory training that all members undertake that also covers best practices for being in an online community with marginalized people at its center. P9 speaks to witnessing the impact of the covenant, code of conduct, community guidelines, and initial training on the platform in regard to outsiders.

*“As a Korean-American man, I did not know what to expect when joining The Stoop. But the initial walk through of the ways to engage gave me a better sense of how to navigate The Stoop in my interactions with people. I have not seen the kind of trolling that can take place on other platforms when people post about racism or other social justice issues. It really feels like the intentionality behind cultivating a community comes through.”* (P9, an Asian-American Pacific Islander male member of The Stoop)

Next, let's consider how the Stoop proactively handles appropriation. Countless stories of appropriation, content stealing, and "culture vultures" abound and existed before the Internet [65]. If your content goes viral but it is not attributed to you, the experience can be more than perturbing. Particularly in the Black community, cultural contributions such as music were lifted, and in some cases repackaged and sold for profit that never seemed to make it back to the originators [30]. This long tradition naturally and unfortunately continued in the digital space. Back in the roaring 20s of the twenty-first century, Jalaiah Harmon, a 14-year-old Black girl at the time, created the Renegade dance on TikTok. However, it was a young white female user named Addison Rae who was invited to "The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon" to teach the dance to the host, the audience, and viewers. Only after backlash on both Rae and Fallon about the gross appropriation unfurled did Harmon finally get credit (and some of her financial due as she performed in a Champion commercial late the following year) [9, 37]. For The Stoop to attempt to address this ugly phenomenon and prevent it from taking place on the platform, Walker and the team decided to build on the watermark TikTok uses in its videos.

*“So the way it would work is, if someone uploaded a GIF, an image, a video from an online source like YouTube or TikTok, or a post from another social media platform, our machine learning model would find the original like a reverse image search on Google. Then we basically do our own version of a citation. We do our best to find the original poster, date, platform, and a link to what we believe is the original. Like any system, it is not perfect, but we are getting better every day and are proud to champion a feature that aims to eliminate inappropriate appropriation on our platform.”* (P2, a Black/Hispanic woman on the design team)

Subsequently, The Stoop also addressed the fear Black Twitter users possessed around being called out. When being called out, there is often the threat of being canceled. As Meredith Clarke notes, "cancel culture" is "reductive and malignant" whereas the act of canceling can instead be "an expression of agency, a choice to withdraw one's attention from someone or something whose values, (in)action, or speech are so offensive, one no longer wishes to grace them with their presence,

time, and money” [16]. People who engage with Black Twitter expressed to us that they were at times concerned about being called out themselves which in turn caused some people to take pause when considering participating in discussions or threads on Black Twitter [42].

*“Since you can find people and interests much easier, The Stoop also does a lot of stuff to make sure the wrong people know they are not welcome right away. But there is also a culture of calling-in instead of calling out so that people who do and want to be a positive and contributing member but step out of pocket can be challenged in love and not canceled or banished forever.” (P13, a Black/Jamaican-American female member of The Stoop)*

For the last challenge, racism, The Stoop combined several tactics to combat such a sinister and longstanding behavior. While the code of conduct and community guidelines grow with the community and incorporate feedback or suggestions from the community, one code exists in perpetuity. The Stoop does not tolerate racism on its platform. Suspended accounts are coupled with required online training about cultural competency and anti-racism in order to regain profiles and therefore access to previous posts, engagements, and accumulated points from The Stoop for completing actions, challenges, and other activities on the platform. In fact, when signing up for The Stoop, there is free training provided by a number of well-renowned social justice organizations that align with the code of conduct and community guidelines. Members who complete the training receive points and perks that become available upon completion. P15, a Hispanic/Puerto Rican non-binary member of The Stoop, expressed how moved they were by the training experience as an introduction to The Stoop membership:

*“When I signed up, I read through all the available training. I was like, whoa they are serious. There was everything ranging from anti-Black racism to Black joy to self-care to learning more about different identities and cultures that were often co-taught by someone of that identity and someone not of that identity. It was cool because it wasn’t like the sole responsibility of a person of color to teach the members of The Stoop about their community. I took as much training as I could and I learned so much. As I started to engage with other members, I could tell the depth of training I went through made me a better member.” (P15, a Hispanic/Puerto Rican non-binary member of The Stoop)*

Whether improving on the groundwork that Black Twitter established or paving a better way to design, develop, and experience a social media platform, The Stoop team, and its members, all conveyed an impactful message about how to build a digital space for Black people. Now that we have outlined the findings from our interviews, we will move into discussing why they are important to this and other online communities.

## 2.6 Discussion

When Yolanda Rankin and India Irish worked with Black women to design a game, they were anchored by the lived experiences of the participants who desired to see themselves in the game and have inclusive and culturally relevant gaming experiences [57]. Similarly, the user experience research and continuous feedback accepted from members of The Stoop helped to inform a design justice-founded approach to crafting the platform. Having a design process informed by several principles of Design Justice allowed Black members to be the experts and lead the design of The Stoop to be what they wanted and needed it to be. Feedback and open communication with members is key for the design and development teams as they welcome and encourage members to share what is working and what is not working on the platform. Feedback is promptly addressed and there is a feature pipeline accessible from the platform at any time for members to know what is coming up next.

Other platforms, especially large ones like Facebook, Twitter, and Reddit, were not started with harassment or content moderation in mind. Most new social media platforms that want to protect users and cultivate non-toxic environments will provide at least a simple code of conduct in their terms of service (even though most users do not read them [27]). The Stoop wanted to do more than just the bare minimum for a community that has been given barely that for generations in many areas of life. For this platform, a robust and thorough harassment and hate speech policy was put into place before the first member signed up with the tools and personnel to manage it also at the ready. In addition to a clean and fashionable design with many bells and whistles for members to enjoy, under the steps of The Stoop lay a deep and unwavering commitment to uplifting and supporting Black people so that they can be their entire selves without backlash or restraint.

When deciding to strive for a predominantly Black design and developer team, Walker set a higher standard than large tech companies whose BIPOC communities were overwhelmingly a small percentage of their overall workforce. Broadening participation in the tech industry from education to hiring and retention is not solely the work of BIPOC people and the incredible organizations that support their journeys. The tech companies and academic institutions that educate and hire marginalized communities need to improve their environments to acquire and retain BIPOC employees long term [58]. By creating boutique and niche digital spaces for specific communities like The Stoop, Walker cultivated just one of many ways to circumvent the issues and toxic spaces that currently exist elsewhere online in an effort to offer more uplifting and life-giving ones.

Walker and her team found the social media platforms of their time (created mainly by white or Asian men) inadequate for their and other marginalized communities, so they created their own. The idea of a marginalized community creating its own platform is not so novel. Fiesler et al. studied the creation and implementation of the fanfiction site Archive of Our Own, also known as AO3 [28]. When a fanfiction community composed mainly of women found existing online options lacking their values, dismissive of their social norms, and in some cases, outright exploitative, an initiative to create their own archive of works turned into a reality. Potential users of the eventual site volunteered as designers, programmers, language translators, and “tag wranglers”<sup>11</sup> to bring the site to life [28]. During the building of AO3, software developers from the fan fiction community took precedence. When the burgeoning site needed more, the site offered to train volunteers from the fanfiction community in programming for the site.

The Stoop and AO3 share similarities in their creation and intentionality. Both The Stoop and AO3 were championed by women who were steeped in their communities and initiated the change they wanted to see in their corners of the Internet. For The Stoop, it was Walker who created the idea for the platform and gathered a team of designers and developers, mostly Black, to bring her vision and that of her community of the Black diaspora to fruition. For AO3, participants interviewed by Fiesler et al. pointed to science and fanfiction author Naomi Novik who sparked the idea for AO3 in a blog post in 2007. Novik pointed out that fan sites of the time were not inclusive and often did not have fanfiction writers involved in the decision-making process. Novik also wrote,

*“We need our own site. We need to put up our own front page that basically says, ‘This is the fannish community, and this is by us, for us, and we support everyone’”* [28].

Though The Stoop slightly differs from AO3 in implementation, the core tenets rooted in feminist HCI as outlined by Fiesler et al. tie the two tales together. Novik and Walker, along with their communities, spearheaded the creation and design of their respective platforms with feminist values such as identity, equity, and empowerment. As Walker and other internal team members

<sup>11</sup>“Wranglers’ main duties involve manually coagulating and connecting all of the new “canonical” tags that users create so that users can freely tag their works however they wish without negatively impacting the site’s search potential” [28]

noted, The Stoop is first and foremost a space for Black people. And yet, everyone who is willing to abide by the code of conduct and community guidelines is welcome to membership. Even though Black Twitter was a major nexus of the Black community online, it exists on Twitter—a platform not created by and for Black people. Alternatively, The Stoop is a platform that caters to the online Black community. For AO3, the platform is open to and designed for all creators and consumers of fanfiction regardless of the property or person.

The tones of AO3 and The Stoop are transparent and compassionate. The newsletter of The Stoop alongside the feature requests/pipeline read and function as though you are communicating with a good friend. Lines of communication remain open between the internal team of The Stoop and its members. For AO3, communication is key between users and the internal team. A Trello board captures feature requests and internal team members provide reasonings whenever a request is rejected and the requests from users are often polite and well reasoned themselves [28]. Thanks in part to the excellent communication between AO3 internal team members and users, when there are technical issues with the platform, users express appreciation, understanding, and support for the team instead of complaints.

AO3 and The Stoop each possess a target marginalized audience while also striving to support (instead of exclude) all marginalized peoples. Such inclusivity that extends beyond the core marginalized group, whether with The Stoop standing in solidarity with a multitude of social justice organizations across groups of people or with AO3 including diverse people beyond focusing on just women, cultivates an open and welcoming environment. The level of inclusivity in both spaces creates an atmosphere of belonging for anyone who wants to do just that. The Stoop's internal team contained an AAPI designer and a White developer. The developer spoke up about their experience at The Stoop not tokenizing them and instead opened the space for honest conversations and learning from everyone's experiences. In AO3, all fans were equally welcome, regardless of their fandom. In addition, advocacy and empowerment created the backbones of AO3 and The Stoop. Ensuring that designers do not impose their personal values upon users showed up in The Stoop through their adherence to design justice principles. For AO3, this manifested as taking in suggestions, desires, and requests from potential and current users.

In conversation with The Stoop, AO3's story is another (mostly) positive example of a marginalized community (mainly women and queer people) creating its own space infused with its collective values. There are critiques of AO3 that surfaced in the summer of 2020 after the killings of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and others when racist content and practices on the site challenged the progressive albeit white feminist leanings of the platform [49]. The Stoop is also not without faults. As the platform gains popularity and members, scaling the current content moderation process with people in the process will prove to be a challenge to maintaining a healthy digital space. In both cases, no platform can match all the values of everyone in the community and needs do change overtime.

In both AO3 and The Stoop, a decision was made to create their own space instead of rehabilitating a shared one. Both Walker and Novik spearheaded a new digital space and platform for their proverbial people and chose to use their power, energy, time, and effort to pour into a space that could be made with their community's needs at the center. For digital spaces that are inclusive of multiple communities or possess a variety of mixed spaces, the lesson to take from exclusive marginalized online communities is to continuously listen to and incorporate the voices and needs of the marginalized on mixed platforms. Include and support the ideas and feedback of the marginalized people using and building the platform. And, of course, ensure that there are marginalized people building the platform who are in an environment within which their talent, experiences, and perspectives are welcomed and encouraged to be shared.

Amiri Baraka wrote about technology and ethos in 1965 and asked, “How do you communicate with the great masses of Black people?” alongside envisioning the vast innovations to the “corny” typewriter that, like many technologies, was limited by the imagination of the (white) West [2]. The imagination and innovation instilled in The Stoop afford the members, a majority of whom are Black, the opportunity to enjoy new ways of communicating with each other and expressing themselves. In cultivating this unique digital space created by and for Black people, The Stoop manages to build on the benefits of Black Twitter and succeeds where Black Twitter struggled. Members shared impressions and experiences wherein shared identities and common practices flourished; the engagements with other members felt safe regardless of a person’s identity; information seeking and sharing proliferated; members acknowledged and rallied against stories of racism and oppression; members lifted each other up and celebrated life with joy; mobilization and activism culminated in real-world impact.

In addition, The Stoop intentionally addressed the challenges of Black Twitter. Because of the desire of Walker and her team to do better by Black people online, their intention was not simply to avoid the challenges people experience when engaging with Black Twitter. Instead, their research, lived experiences, and conversations with potential members informed a response that addressed the challenges. Overall, Walker and her team learned from Black Twitter, other platforms and online communities, scholars, and researchers to build a platform that emphasized the good and actively minimized and mitigated harms.

## 2.7 Conclusion

The Stoop is an innovative and vibrant social media platform for Black people and subsequently marginalized people. By interviewing the founder Rashida Walker and members of her design and development team, we were able to learn how they crafted a digital space specifically for Black people first and foremost. The members of The Stoop shared their experiences which confirmed the platform is an improvement from spaces like Black Twitter. After bringing to light our findings and discussing their relevance, we hope to encourage more Black and marginalized people to engage with The Stoop as well as inspire current platforms to improve their design and offerings for the Black and marginalized people who use their social network.

While interviewing the team and platform members of The Stoop, we distilled two main takeaways for other platforms looking to design or optimize for marginalized groups. The first takeaway is to strive for a diverse team across deliverables for the platform and foster an environment in which everyone can contribute and thrive. The lived experiences of these marginalized people can positively inform the experience for users on the platform. Additionally, the intentional efforts of Walker and her internal team to include everyone and honor each person’s stories and talents goes far in retaining talent and helping team members feel valued. With tech companies struggling to hire and retain marginalized people across the industry [75], the opportunity to broaden participation at each aspect of the product or service lifecycle will only improve not only the numbers on diversity but the experiences working for and consuming from tech companies.

The second takeaway from our research on The Stoop is to allow internal and external research to impact the platform. Walker’s team conducted user experience research amongst themselves and with members of the platform. The team also familiarized themselves with research in human-computer interaction around several relevant topics for The Stoop (content moderation, online communities like Black Twitter, etc) and used that research to improve their product. The Stoop’s approach flies in the face of traditional tech companies like Google and Facebook. In 2021, the company fired Timnit Gebru, the co-lead to Google’s ethical AI research team, when the implications of her research would affect their bottom line [62]. In the same year, Facebook’s whistleblower Frances Haugen, a former data scientist for the company, leaked documents in an effort to inform

the public about internal processes and decisions that negatively affected society. She also wanted the company to take the leaks as an opportunity to do better. In response to the leaks, Facebook denied the accusations and called into question the veracity of Haugen's claims [1, 23]. Instead of burying or thwarting criticism, The Stoop welcomes feedback internally and externally. Their approach to research is an inspiration for how traditional tech can improve more than just their bottom line.

Engaging in design justice principles, learning from the shortcomings and successes of other platforms, and incorporating the lived experiences of a diverse team into the platform all made for the unique, successful, and Black platform we can admire and learn from today. For future work, we would like to explore more of the innovative features of The Stoop in an effort to highlight how members are taking advantage of these new affordances. We would also like to continue monitoring the challenges and triumphs of the platform over time. Ideally, success stories like The Stoop set a standard and a precedent for marginalized communities online to create their own spaces not only just to survive, but to thrive.

### 3 AUTHORS' CONCLUDING NOTES

Costanza-Chock had something like The Stoop in mind when they wrote, "We have to articulate a vision of the world we want, don't we?" [18]. Taking this statement to task, this design fiction lays out a future within which marginalized people craft the digital space they want and need aligned with Costanza-Chock's design justice principles. Kozubaev et al. encourage researchers and designers engaging in design futuring, an umbrella term that includes design and speculative fiction, to incorporate reflexivity into their process to ensure they are "futuring from somewhere" [43]. As the first author identifies as a Black woman with a myriad of marginalized identities, the vision articulated in this design fiction is crafted mainly from the perspective and hopes of a multi-marginalized person. Instead of a design fiction that explores what is wrong with the Twitters and Facebooks of the world, this design fiction centers the experiences and voices of Black people in a digital space built by and for them with the express effort to inspire and bring joy to people striving for these spaces today. To the point of Prado and Oliveira, why write a design fiction about a dystopian social media platform when marginalized people are already living in that reality? Instead, as they write, there is a need for more diversity in the people speculating who can "[envision] near future scenarios [that] might just help us reflect on the paths we want to take as a society" [56].

The aspects of this design fiction build up a positive vision of a future wherein melanated magic thrives in the digital space. The decision to focus on a desired future for Black people in the digital space adheres to Costanza-Chock's call to "spur our imaginations about how to move beyond a system of technology design largely organized around the reproduction of the matrix of domination (as outlined by Patricia Hill Collins [36]). In its place, we need to imagine how all aspects of design can be reorganized around human capabilities, collective liberation, and ecological sustainability" [18]. By imagining a platform that is designed with the Black user in mind from the start, we are able to forge a mental path that current and future platforms can follow. Orienting the design and development process for the platforms of today around design justice principles instead of just profits or chasing daily active users will create more welcoming spaces where marginalized people can cultivate deep and meaningful connections. Other inspiration for this design fiction, besides the story of AO3, fell into the category of "how can we learn from this shortcoming and do better?" So much of the research about technology and the Black community, including computing education and Black people, approaches the subject from a deficit model and focuses on harm as several researchers have noted [24, 38, 40, 58]. Instead, this design fiction is inspired by Black joy.

In a 2020 article for *The Atlantic*, scholar and journalist Imani Perry poignantly declared, “joy is not found in the absence of pain and suffering. It exists through it” [55]. Despite centuries and generations of long suffering, the Black diaspora and Black community in the United States persist and insist on joy in the midst of sorrow. For their study of Black women and femmes experiencing harassment, healing, and joy on social media, Musgrave et al. outline a number of key points and takeaways that align with the fictional creation and implementation of *The Stoop*.

First, Musgrave et al. note that the current climate of social media platforms relies on surveillance and carceral logics, but possible platforms could be informed by design, transformative, and restorative justice [51]. This design fiction intentionally designed *The Stoop* as building upon what online marginalized communities are doing right, incorporating design justice throughout the design and development process, and choosing to turn away from “business as usual” as a social media platform by providing deep and ongoing support to various social justice organizations.

Second, Musgrave et al. critique punitive content moderation that punishes the offender instead of attempting to rehabilitate and content moderation in general for falling short for the Black women and femmes (amongst other overwhelmingly marginalized people) who resort to reporting and blocking only to find the process ineffective [51]. Other research from Xiao et al. with adolescents and online harm shares this critique of punitive responses to content moderation and also lifts up restorative justice in an effort to expand how effective content moderation can be for providing safety, sensemaking, support, retribution, and transformation [76]. As previously mentioned, *The Stoop*’s approach to content moderation includes a restorative justice approach that allows members who violate the code of conduct or community guidelines to work their way through various increasingly involved requirements designed to encourage internal and intrinsic cultural competency. This approach also aligns with the efforts of *The Stoop* as a platform and community to call members in instead of calling out or canceling.

Thirdly, Musgrave et al. concede that the experiences of misogynoir<sup>12</sup> and harassment Black women and femmes experience online do not exist solely because of technological platforms. Such platforms do amplify and exacerbate these experiences. But, these incidents flow from their offline counterparts as part of a vast ocean of sociohistorical realities within which we all tread. Online harassment cannot be untangled from the offline manifestations of racism, sexism, homophobia, religious intolerance, and more. There is no hope of “solving” online harassment without simultaneously and vigorously pursuing the eradication of oppressive systems offline. Here, *The Stoop*’s commitment to social justice organizations doing this very work falls in line with this approach. On the whole, *The Stoop* encompasses the future platform that Musgrave et al. envision.

The act of speculating future technologies can be a powerful tool for future and current technologists to explore potential harms as well as the uplifting possibilities of technology in the near or distant future [41]. In this design fiction, we demonstrated the purpose and power of positive speculation and make the case that design fiction can function from an uplifting as opposed to purely critical perspective. We also positioned people of color, namely Black people, as agents of change in the tech industry through design. The future social media platform we crafted included a Black woman as the founder, a predominantly Black design and development team, and mainly Black members. The platform contended with issues of content moderation using restorative justice and questions of design with design justice principles. Fictional studies such as the one we presented here allow space for dreaming, righting wrongs, and confronting shortcomings about and beyond current technologies. Imagine the possibilities of more diverse teams and how broadening participation from marginalized people can invite innovation and new ideas into the design and development

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<sup>12</sup>“Moya Bailey’s concept of misogynoir describes the passive and active ways that Black women and femmes are depicted as ugly, deficient, hypersexual, and unhealthy in digital spaces.” [51]

of future technology. If Rashida Walker can make every effort to have a majority-minority design and development team, perhaps the tech industry of today could be inspired and challenged to do more with their hiring and retention of diverse talent. The Stoop functions as a beacon of how digital spaces for marginalized online communities can evolve. Our hope is to bring light to joyful speculative thinking about future technology that impacts Black communities in an effort to infuse positive yet informed ideas and hopes into the designs of tomorrow's tech.

#### 4 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to thank Dr. Jasmine Jones for her feedback on this design fiction.

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